

## **REMARKS**

Applicants have amended their claims in order to further define various aspects of the present invention, so as to achieve earliest possible issuance of a U.S. Patent based upon the above-identified application. Specifically, rejected claims 1-5, 16-18 and 20-23 are presently being cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer; and, in particular, without prejudice to the filing of a Continuing application directed to the subject matter thereof.

In addition, claims 6, 7, 19, 24 and 25 are being amended in light of objections set forth in Item 1 on page 2 of the Office Action mailed September 29, 2003.

Initially, entry of the present amendments is respectfully requested, notwithstanding finality of the Office Action mailed September 29, 2003. In this regard, note that the present amendments that cancel claims, delete all claims rejected on prior art grounds in the above-identified application. Clearly, entry of amendments canceling claims is proper, under 37 CFR §1.116(a).

Moreover, amendments of the claims consistent with suggestions by the Examiner in Item 1 on pages 2 and 3 of the Office Action mailed September 29, 2003, is clearly appropriate, for removing issues remaining in connection with the above-identified application and so as to present the objected claims in allowable condition, noting the indication by the Examiner in Item 6 on page 5 of the Office Action mailed September 29, 2003. Furthermore, noting objections to claims made for the first time in the Office Action mailed September 29, 2003, is respectfully submitted that the present amendments are timely. Again, noting the indication by the Examiner that by amending the claims to overcome the bases for the listed objections, the amended claims would be allowable, clearly the present amendments materially limit issues remaining in connection with the above-identified application.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that Applicants have made the necessary showing under 37 CFR §1.116(c); and that, accordingly, entry of the present amendments is clearly proper.

Note that in claims 6, 7, 19, 24 and 25, Applicants have followed suggestions made by the Examiner, but in the next-to-last line of claim 6 Applicants have recited "the" material used to form the longitudinal ends. In light of these amendments, the objection, and required amendments, as set forth in Item 1 on pages 2 and 3 of the Office Action mailed September 29, 2003, are moot.

In light of canceling of claims 1-5, 16-18 and 20-23, it is respectfully submitted that the prior art rejections set forth in Items 3 and 5 on pages 3-5 of the Office Action mailed September 29, 2003, are moot. Accordingly, no further discussion of the prior art rejections is necessary herein.

The Information Disclosure Statement filed October 20, 2003, in the above-identified application, is noted. This Information Disclosure Statement, including the Statement made under 37 CFR §1.97(e)(1) therein, satisfies all applicable requirements of 37 CFR §1.97 and §1.98. Consideration of the references listed in this Information Disclosure Statement, upon further examination of the above-identified application, is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing, entry of the present amendments, and reconsideration and allowance of all claims presently in the application, after consideration of the aforementioned Information Disclosure Statement, are respectfully requested.

To the extent necessary, applicants petition for an extension of time under 37 CFR §1.136. Please charge any shortage in the fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to the deposit account of

Antonelli, Terry, Stout & Kraus, LLP, Deposit Account No. 01-2135 (Case:  
648.41258X00), and please credit any excess fees to such deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William I. Solomon", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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